
Research Report

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Nursing Home Satisfaction Program Survey Administration and Reporting

Executive Summary Report

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I. Summary

This report provides statewide results for Massachusetts' first survey of satisfaction among responsible parties¹ for residents living in nursing homes. In completing this work, Massachusetts is among a handful of states to develop and provide comprehensive satisfaction data for use by consumers and nursing homes.

The Nursing Home Satisfaction Program, sponsored by the Department of Public Health (DPH), provides a number of measures of satisfaction. Detailed information came from fifty-three questions classified into six domains that rated the facility staff, physical environment, activities, personal care services, food and meals and residents' personal rights as well as rating overall satisfaction and ability to meet residents' needs. Key findings of the survey, based on nearly 15,000 surveys representing 297 nursing homes, included the following:

- The statewide average for overall satisfaction is 4.25 based on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.
- The statewide average for meeting resident needs is 4.10 using the same 1-5 scale.

Individual domain scores were centered on the satisfied level (4.0). All item scores were at or above a 3 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). The highest ranking domain is Administrative and Personal Care Staff with a statewide average of 4.18. The lowest ranking is Activities with a state average of 3.84. Homes with fewer beds and homes in some regions rated slightly higher than others in the same category. The analysis relied on a 95% confidence interval so that comparisons made between the state and peer groups are accurate. Likewise, comparisons can be reliably made across domain scores.

Respondents to the survey were mainly middle aged and female. They reported that they visited at least once per week, mostly during the day. While nursing homes are increasingly caring for people with stays of less than four weeks, the DPH study was specifically targeted to cover long term residents with stays of four weeks or longer. 53% of respondents reported resident stays of two years or longer.

This report provides the reader with the results categorized in different ways. The report provides average scores and the ranges into which the averages fall (confidence intervals) for overall satisfaction items, domains and individual survey items. The report provides peer group comparisons by region and bed size. Individual survey questions are shown with the associated averages and confidence intervals.

¹In this research a responsible party is the contact person for the resident. In nearly all cases, this person was a son, daughter, spouse or other blood relative.

II. Background and Survey Development

For some time, the public, state leaders and industry professionals in Massachusetts have been interested in reliable data that would allow consumers to compare nursing homes prior to making a selection. Legislation was introduced in the FY 2002 budget that provided that “the division shall develop a confidential satisfaction survey for long-term care facilities . . . surveys initially of family members, guardians or other resident designees.” In 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Health Care Quality, contracted with the Rutgers University Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research (IHHCPAR) and Market Decisions, a commercial research firm, to develop a survey of responsible party satisfaction with personal care services and facility operations for residents in nursing homes. The Massachusetts Extended Care Federation and Massachusetts Aging Services Association were part of the team that reviewed and approved the work plan. Researchers developed and pilot tested survey questions and methods in late 2003 and DPH began implementing the survey in the Fall of 2004. This systematic effort resulted in a survey based on what consumers said was important to them and then fully tested and validated the survey culminating in 2005 with the actual administration of the survey.

The objectives of this research were:

To measure responsible party satisfaction in Massachusetts Nursing Homes and to

- Compare responses among all nursing homes;
- Compare responses among nursing homes in the same geographic area; and
- Compare responses among nursing homes of similar size.

In addition to providing a comparison tool for consumers, the study enables a nursing home to compare itself to peers and to set targets for quality improvement. While a number of published measures are available, these tend to evaluate nursing homes from a regulatory standpoint. The most notable tools are the Massachusetts Nursing Home Report Card (a service of DPH) and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Nursing Home Compare websites. DPH’s research complements the other sites by asking consumers directly about their satisfaction and providing a reliable set of measures based on their own personal experiences. This research relies on an approach that presents the voice of the actual consumer.

As part of this research, participating nursing homes will receive a customized report that presents results for the home and allows comparisons to statewide and peer averages. In addition, the DPH’s Division of Health Care Quality will make individual nursing home data available on the web to allow consumers to compare one home to another.

The survey instrument includes fifty-three questions that rate satisfaction of responsible parties with the supporting services that the resident receives and with the nursing home environment. Each of these questions addresses a specific aspect of these services and environment that was identified in focus groups as important to responsible parties and then confirmed in one-on-one interviews. The survey includes three measures of overall satisfaction with the nursing home. All of the questions use a five-point scale: 1 - very dissatisfied; 2 – dissatisfied;

3 – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 4 – satisfied; 5 - very satisfied. The questions are organized into six domains or related topic areas as follows:

- Administrative and personal care staff
- Physical environment
- Activities
- Personal care services
- Food and meals
- Residents' personal rights

Issues of medical treatment were outside the scope of this study.

III. Survey Methodology

All nursing homes in Massachusetts that had one or more residents with stays of four weeks or longer were included in the survey sample. All responsible parties for these residents in these nursing homes would be eligible to receive and complete a survey.

The potential survey population consisted of approximately 40,000 responsible parties for residents in 479 nursing homes. Beginning in January 2005, facilities were contacted by letter and then by telephone to introduce them to the survey objectives and process and to request their participation. The Massachusetts Extended Care Federation and Massachusetts Aging Services Association supported this effort by encouraging their members to participate.

At the time of the study, Massachusetts had records for 479 facilities. Of these, five facilities were closed and an additional twenty-five were ineligible because they served short-term stay residents only. Some 297 facilities participated, 66% of the total eligible.

Staff worked with individual homes to develop mailing lists of responsible parties. A total of 25,655 eligible responsible parties were identified. A survey package was mailed to responsible parties on May, 2005. In order to maximize the response rate, a postcard reminder was mailed to all responsible parties one week after the initial mailing. Two weeks later, another complete survey package was sent to non-respondents. A third copy of the survey was mailed to some responsible parties as well as follow-up telephone calls to increase response rates for some facilities.

All surveys received through August, 2005 were accepted. A total of 16,358 surveys of the 25,655 surveys mailed were returned, for a response rate of 64%. When duplicate and blank surveys were removed, 14,886 surveys were included for analysis.

IV. Comparison Groups

Since the meaning of the data is difficult to interpret without reference points, scores are presented by comparison or peer group.

For the purpose of making comparisons, facilities were classified into peer groups based on two key characteristics: (1) facilities in the same geographic region; and (2) facilities of similar bed size. Peer group averages provide benchmarks that can then be compared to each other and to statewide results. Results for all peer groups are presented in the charts and tables. Please refer to Section VI on Interpreting the Meaning of Differences between Scores.

Regional Locations

Locations for peer group comparisons are based upon Massachusetts Hospital Service Areas (HSAs). The regions are listed below and include:

West: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester Counties

North: Essex County and northern Middlesex County

Metro: Suffolk County and parts of Middlesex and Norfolk Counties

South: Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, and Plymouth Counties and parts of Norfolk County

Size

Nursing home size categories for peer group comparisons are calculated from bed size counts provided for each facility. Size categories include: Sixty or fewer beds, 61-80 beds, 81-100 beds, 101-140 beds, and more than 140 beds.

V. Interpreting Statistical Differences between Satisfaction Scores

All scores in this report are expressed as weighted averages. The weighted average is the arithmetic mean of a set of numbers that have been adjusted by the addition of a statistical, or weighting, value. It is calculated by adding up all weighted scores and dividing by the total number of responses. The counts (n) that appear in the tables are the counts of survey respondents. Such counts reflect the number of respondents who answered an item or relevant items within a domain.

Because the averages provided in this report are, due to sampling, only estimates of the actual averages, satisfaction scores are best interpreted not as single points but as ranges. Determination of an actual average would require surveying the entire population, an infeasible task. For this reason all charts and graphs show a numerical average score and then a range at a 95% confidence interval.

The confidence interval, the black bars in the graphs and “CI” in the charts, defines the statistical reliability of the estimate of the average. That is, we can be 95% confident that the range of values delineated by the confidence interval includes the actual average. This is one of the most common statistical techniques for assessing accuracy.

The confidence interval is key to understanding whether a difference between any two sets of responses is statistically significant. For example, in *Figure 1.1. Domain Scores for the State*, “Personal Services” has an average score of 4.08 and “Personal Rights” has an average score of 4.09. However, in the graph the black bars for each question overlap and the chart shows that ranges of the high and low averages overlap. The average scores for the questions, while they appear to be slightly different, are not statistically different.

A difference between domain scores, overall satisfaction items or across groups is considered statistically significant only if there is no overlap in the confidence intervals.

VI. Interpreting the Meaning of Differences between Scores

The most appropriate way to interpret scores is in relation to another score. That is, comparing one domain score to another, comparing one peer group to another or comparing a score to a statewide average. The comprehensive data to be made available on the DPH website will also allow consumers to compare the results for individual nursing homes. Likewise, nursing homes can evaluate themselves relative to their peers. The primary objective of this research is to allow such comparisons.

All the average scores presented in this report are above a rating of 3 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). The majority of scores vary either slightly above or slightly below a rating of 4 (somewhat satisfied). The obvious question is, “is a score good or bad?” It is not unusual for satisfaction scores to be skewed to the positive. Of course, this requires positive consumer satisfaction. This survey shows that while consumers are generally satisfied with the personal care their relatives receive, there is always room for improvement.

Comparisons between scores should first be checked for statistical significance. Is there overlap between the confidence intervals? If there is no overlap the differences are statistically significant. To identify meaningful differences we suggest that readers look at top rated items and domains and compare them to lower rated items. We also suggest comparing differences between geographic areas and homes’ sizes.

Readers should also note that the scales (ranges) of the vertical axes (ordinates) of the graphs are not equivalent to one another and do not display the full range of possible scores. Rather, they each cover a different range of half a point (0.50). For example, the scale on Fig. 1.1 begins at 3.80 and ends at 4.30 while that on Fig. 1.2 begins at 4.00 and ends at 4.50. Thus, the figures cannot be directly compared side to side. Moreover, what may appear visually as a very large difference may not in fact be large. For example, the difference in average scores in Fig. 1.2 of 4.31 for smaller homes and 4.15 for the largest homes appear to be very large, yet the difference, while statistically significant, is only a fraction of a point (0.16 or about 1/6th). On the full scale, this difference represents a 4% difference in average scores.

With these considerations in mind we note the following:

- There were differences in the ratings of some areas of nursing home satisfaction. For example, “Administrative and Personal Care Staff” and the “Physical Environment” of nursing homes are rated somewhat higher on average than “Meals” and “Activities”.
- With respect to scores on individual questions, some aspects of nursing home life and personal care were clearly rated higher than others. For example, “friendly staff”, “staff treats the resident with kindness and respect” and “resident gets his or her medication at the appropriate time” were the top rated items. Conversely, “enough outdoor activities” “variety of stimulating activities offered” and the “amount of physical exercise offered” were among the lowest rated items (although still rated positively).

- Satisfaction ratings also varied by size of the nursing home. Most domains, but not all, are rated somewhat higher, on average, among homes with less than 60 beds and lower among homes with more than 141 beds.
- Regional and facility differences exist such that some regions scored slightly higher by domain and overall satisfaction.

The 2005 Massachusetts Nursing Home Satisfaction Survey is intended to be the first of what will be a multi-year effort. Data collected from subsequent surveys will provide another important relative measure. Has there been improvement or has there been decline? This data is the critical part of what may be a self-regulating quality improvement cycle. Consumers can use data to aid in their selection of a nursing home. Nursing homes can identify areas for improvement and through quality improvement initiatives, better meet the needs of consumers.

VII. Domain Scores

The following graphs and charts compare average scores by area of nursing home supporting services and environment. They are the domain scores.

Domain scores are calculated by averaging the scores on the five-point scale across all valid items within that domain. This resulted in an average domain score that ranged from 1 to 5. In some cases, a responsible party may not have evaluated all the items within a domain, perhaps because it did not apply or the information was not available, resulting in differences in counts (n) for each domain.

Figure 1.1. Domain Scores for the State

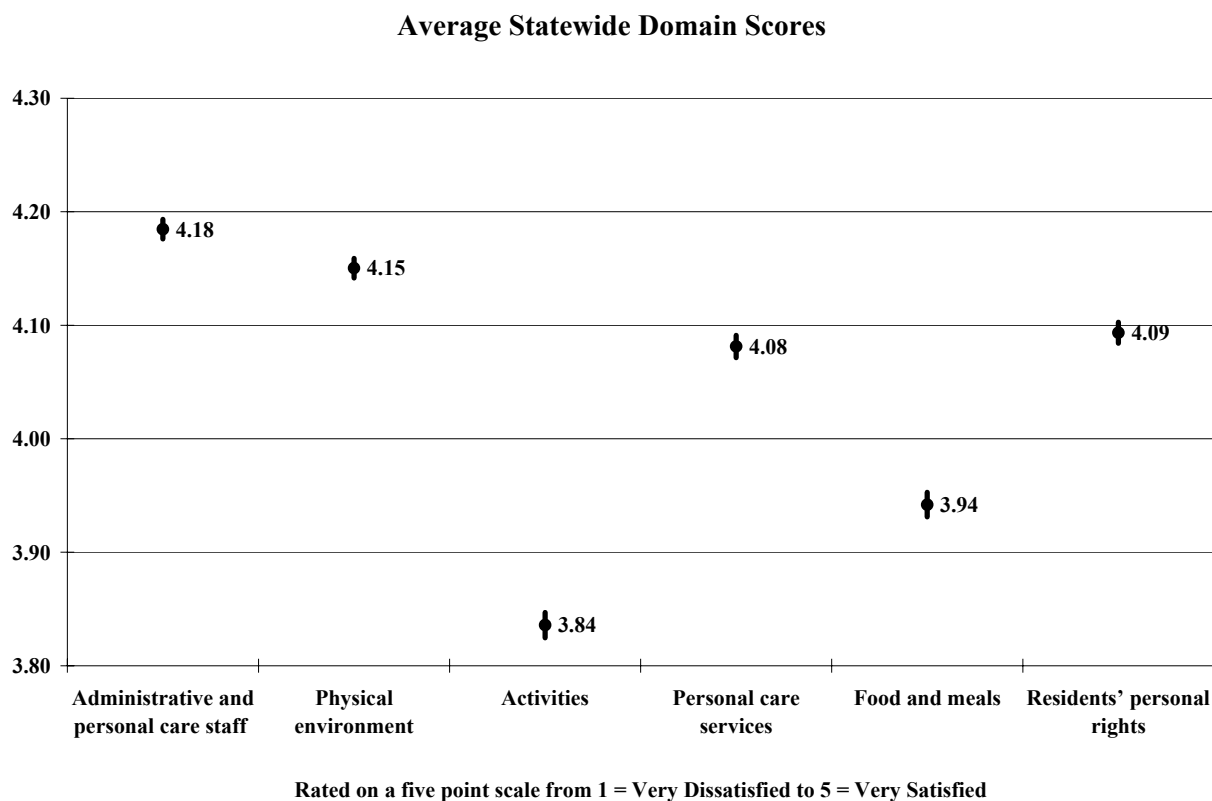


Table 1.1. Average Domain Scores for the State

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Administrative and personal care staff	14177	4.18	4.18	4.19
Physical environment	14704	4.15	4.14	4.16
Activities	12822	3.84	3.82	3.85
Personal care services	13907	4.08	4.07	4.09
Food and meals	13500	3.94	3.93	3.95
Residents' personal rights	13874	4.09	4.08	4.10

Figure 1.2. Administrative and personal care staff Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

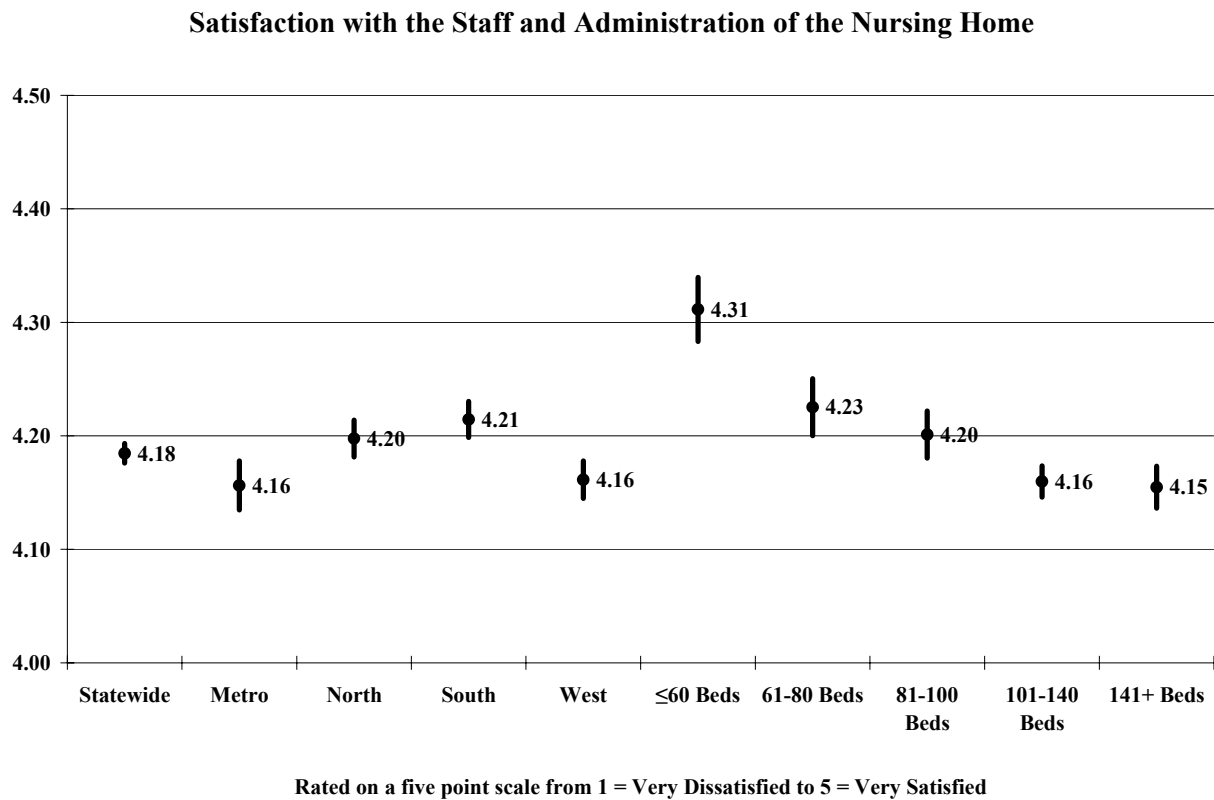
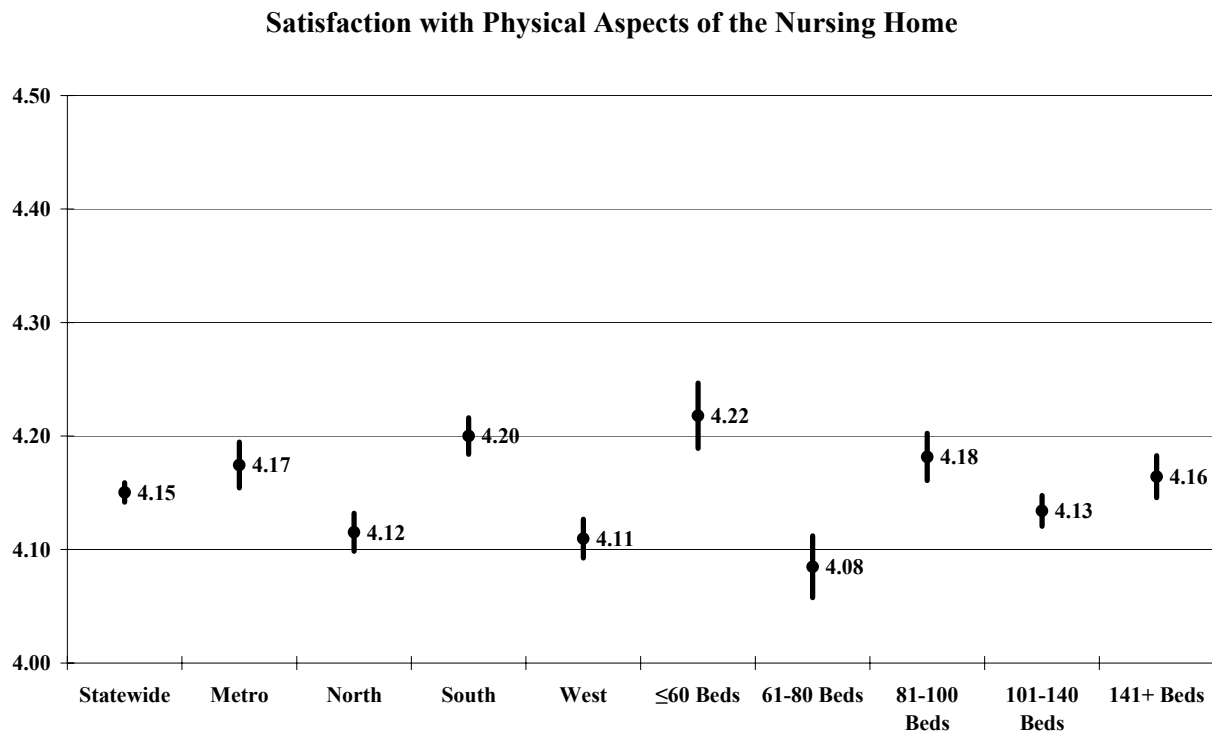


Table 1.2. Administrative and personal care staff Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	14177	4.18	4.18	4.19
Region				
Metro	2687	4.16	4.13	4.18
North	3688	4.20	4.18	4.21
South	4297	4.21	4.20	4.23
West	3505	4.16	4.14	4.18
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1387	4.31	4.28	4.34
61-80 Beds	1455	4.23	4.20	4.25
81-100 Beds	2321	4.20	4.18	4.22
101-140 Beds	5910	4.16	4.15	4.17
141+ Beds	3104	4.15	4.14	4.17

Figure 1.3. Physical Environment Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups



Rated on a five point scale from 1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied

Table 1.3 Physical Environment Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	14704	4.15	4.14	4.16
Region				
Metro	2816	4.17	4.15	4.19
North	3816	4.12	4.10	4.13
South	4425	4.20	4.18	4.22
West	3647	4.11	4.09	4.13
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1450	4.22	4.19	4.25
61-80 Beds	1519	4.08	4.06	4.11
81-100 Beds	2389	4.18	4.16	4.20
101-140 Beds	6145	4.13	4.12	4.15
141+ Beds	3201	4.16	4.15	4.18

Figure 1.4. Activities Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

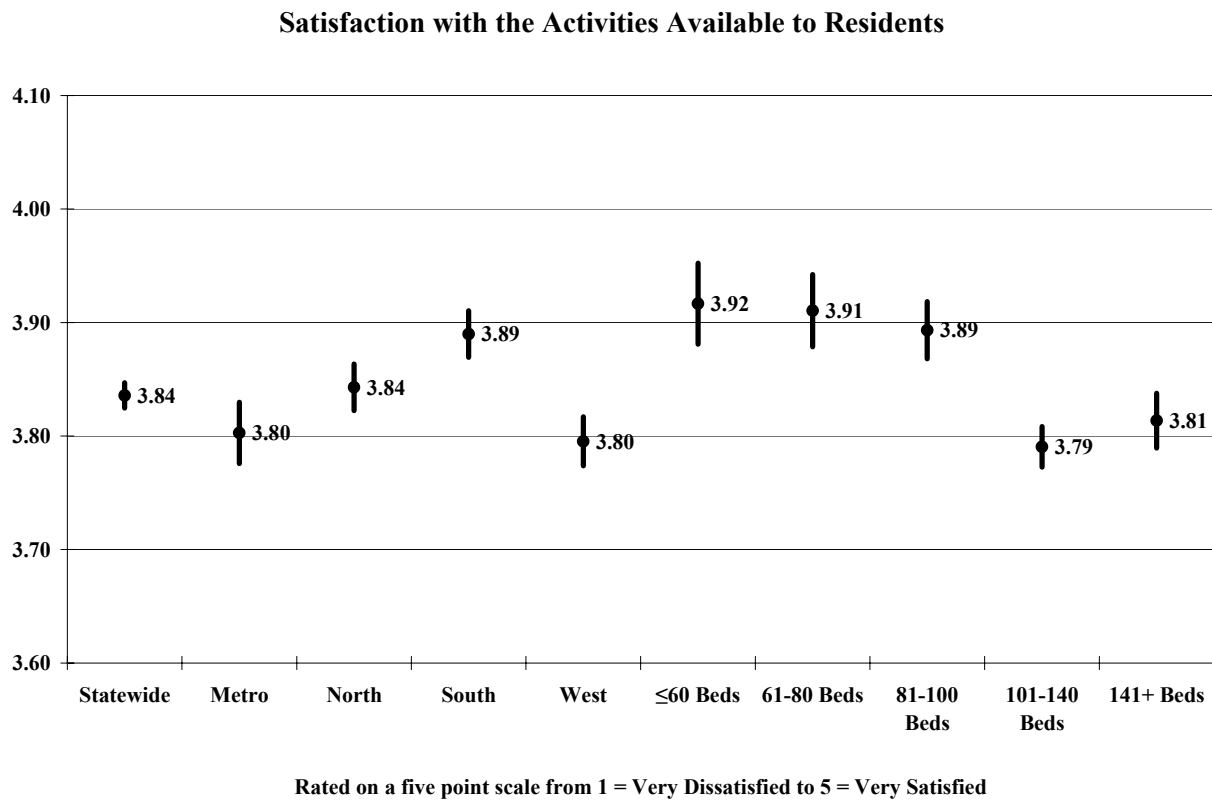


Table 1.4. Activities Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	12822	3.84	3.82	3.85
Region				
Metro	2442	3.80	3.78	3.83
North	3318	3.84	3.82	3.86
South	3871	3.89	3.87	3.91
West	3191	3.80	3.77	3.82
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1276	3.92	3.88	3.95
61-80 Beds	1322	3.91	3.88	3.94
81-100 Beds	2127	3.89	3.87	3.92
101-140 Beds	5331	3.79	3.77	3.81
141+ Beds	2766	3.81	3.79	3.84

Figure 1.5. Personal Care Services Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

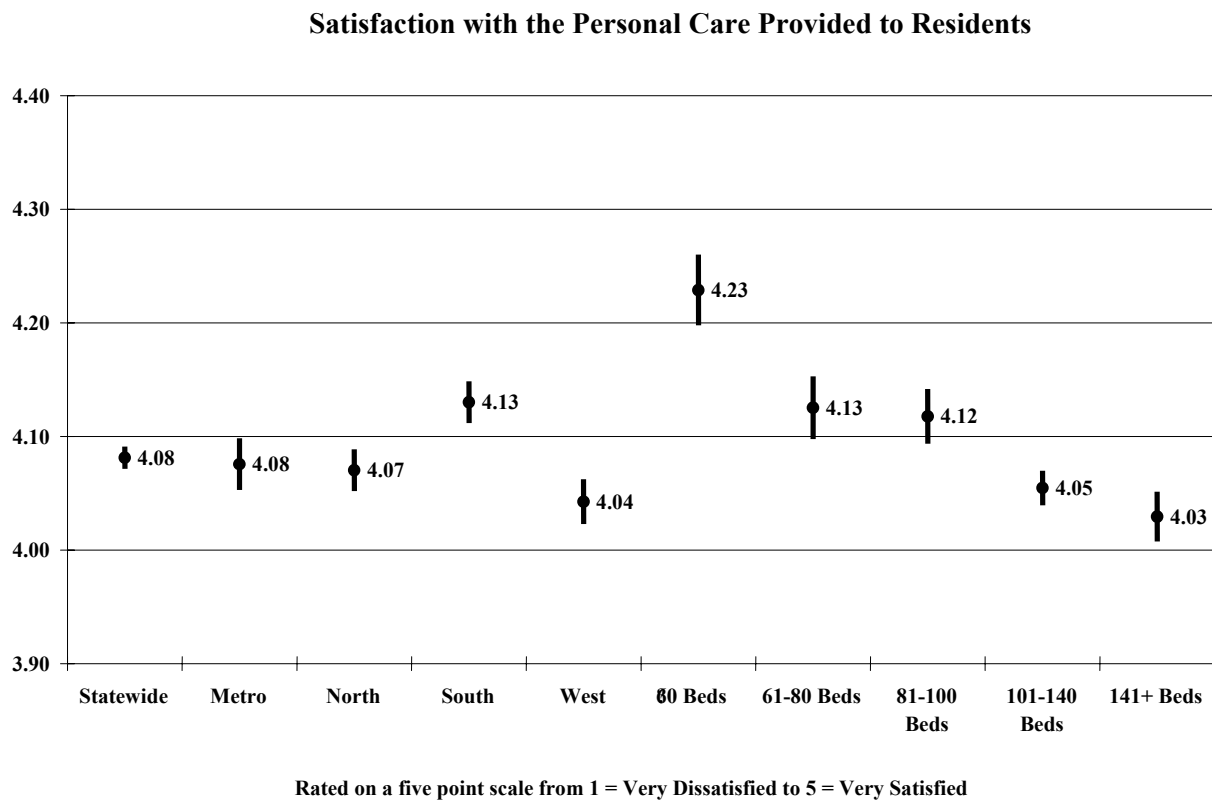


Table 1.5. Personal Care Services Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	13907	4.08	4.07	4.09
Region				
Metro	2676	4.08	4.05	4.10
North	3591	4.07	4.05	4.09
South	4185	4.13	4.11	4.15
West	3455	4.04	4.02	4.06
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1382	4.23	4.20	4.26
61-80 Beds	1443	4.13	4.10	4.15
81-100 Beds	2261	4.12	4.09	4.14
101-140 Beds	5779	4.05	4.04	4.07
141+ Beds	3042	4.03	4.01	4.05

Figure 1.6. Food and Meals Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

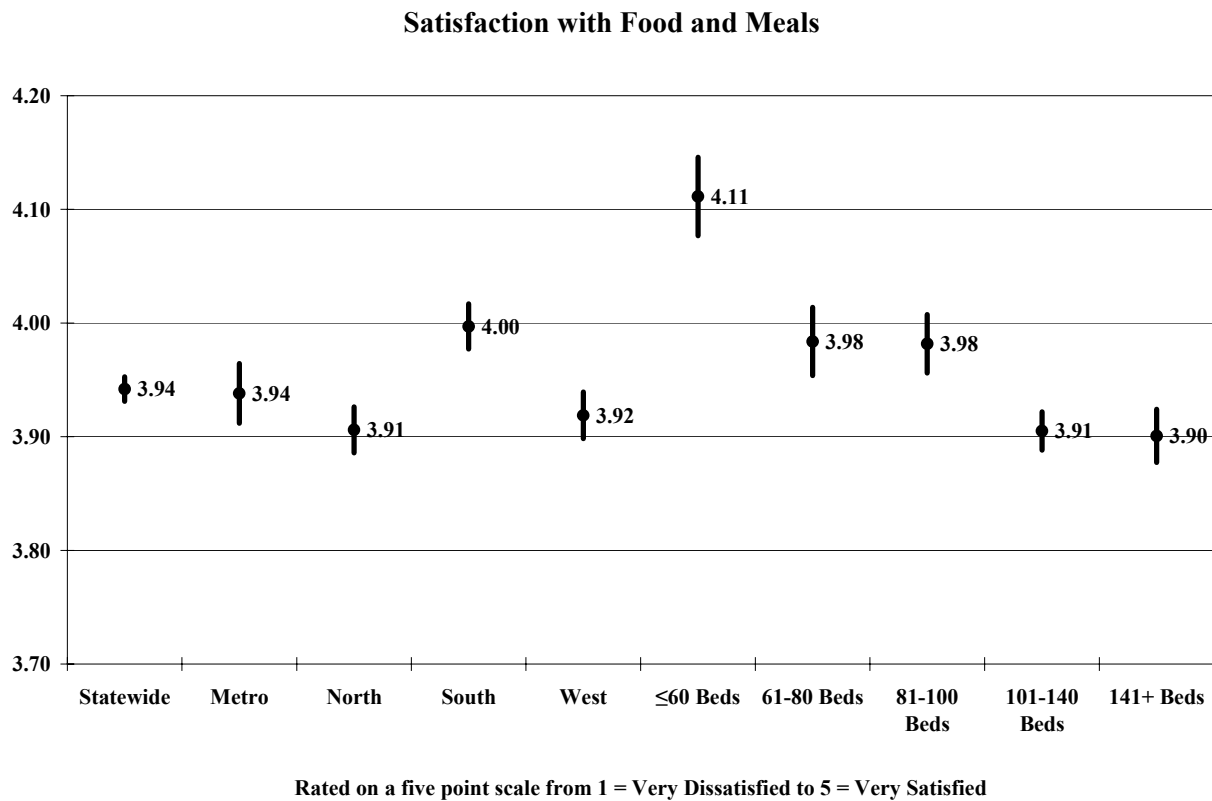


Table 1.6. Food and Meals Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	13500	3.94	3.93	3.95
Region				
Metro	2580	3.94	3.91	3.96
North	3513	3.91	3.89	3.93
South	4059	4.00	3.98	4.02
West	3348	3.92	3.90	3.94
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1349	4.11	4.08	4.15
61-80 Beds	1359	3.98	3.95	4.01
81-100 Beds	2216	3.98	3.96	4.01
101-140 Beds	5636	3.91	3.89	3.92
141+ Beds	2940	3.90	3.88	3.92

Figure 1.7. Residents' personal rights Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups



Rated on a five point scale from 1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied

Table 1.7. Residents' personal rights Domain Score Comparisons by Peer Groups

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	13874	4.09	4.08	4.10
Region				
Metro	2632	4.07	4.05	4.10
North	3607	4.08	4.07	4.10
South	4188	4.15	4.13	4.16
West	3447	4.06	4.05	4.08
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1366	4.22	4.19	4.25
61-80 Beds	1425	4.12	4.09	4.15
81-100 Beds	2270	4.11	4.09	4.13
101-140 Beds	5807	4.07	4.06	4.09
141+ Beds	3006	4.06	4.04	4.08

VIII. Overall Satisfaction Scores

Two questions were included in the survey to assess overall satisfaction.

- Overall, how satisfied are you that all of the resident's needs are met?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with this nursing home?

The scores for these two questions were calculated by dividing the total scores for each item by the number of valid responses.

In addition, a third measure of overall satisfaction was calculated from eight questions that ask about overall satisfaction with key aspects of the nursing home, its staff, and the personal care it provides.

Charts and graphs for these questions follow.

Figure 2.1 . Overall Satisfaction Calculated from Eight Topic Scores

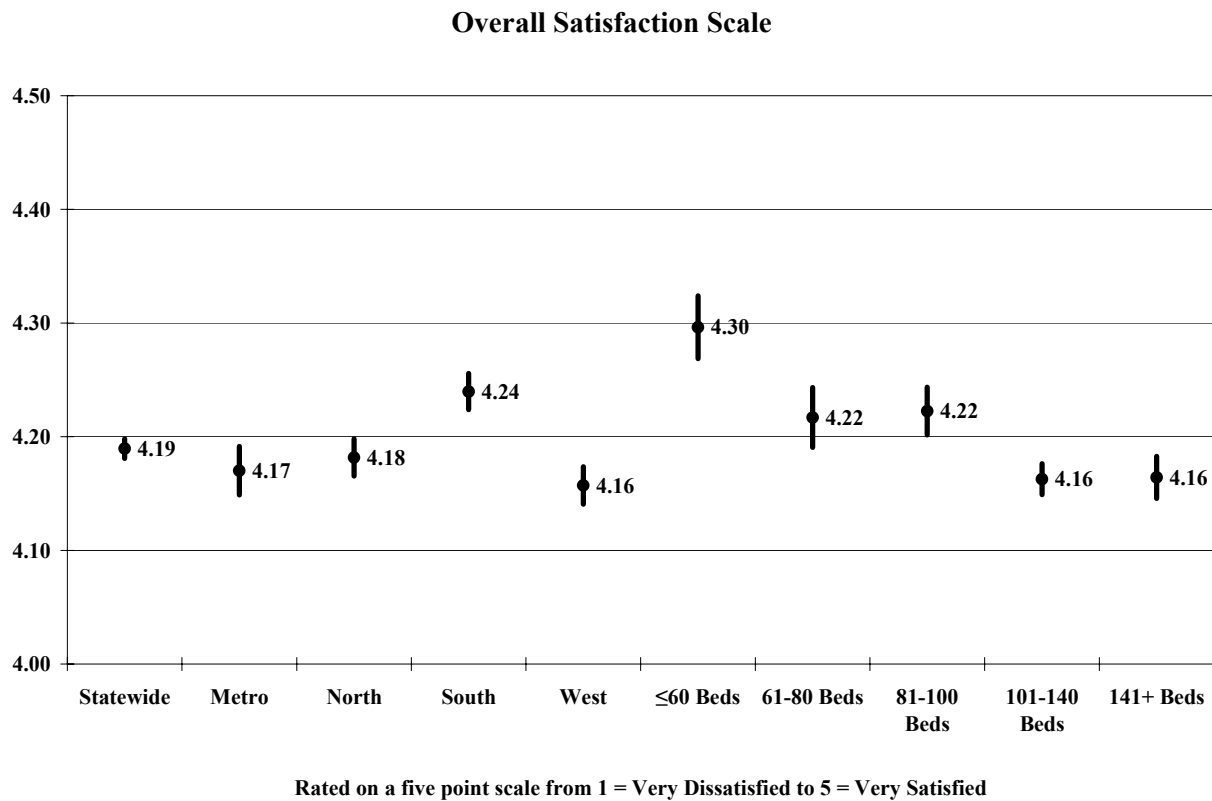


Table 2.1. Overall Satisfaction Calculated from Eight Topic Scores

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	14638	4.19	4.18	4.20
Region				
Metro	2795	4.17	4.15	4.19
North	3809	4.18	4.17	4.20
South	4405	4.24	4.22	4.26
West	3629	4.16	4.14	4.17
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1441	4.30	4.27	4.32
61-80 Beds	1515	4.22	4.19	4.24
81-100 Beds	2384	4.22	4.20	4.24
101-140 Beds	6120	4.16	4.15	4.18
141+ Beds	3178	4.16	4.15	4.18

Figure 2.2 . Overall, how satisfied are you with this nursing home?

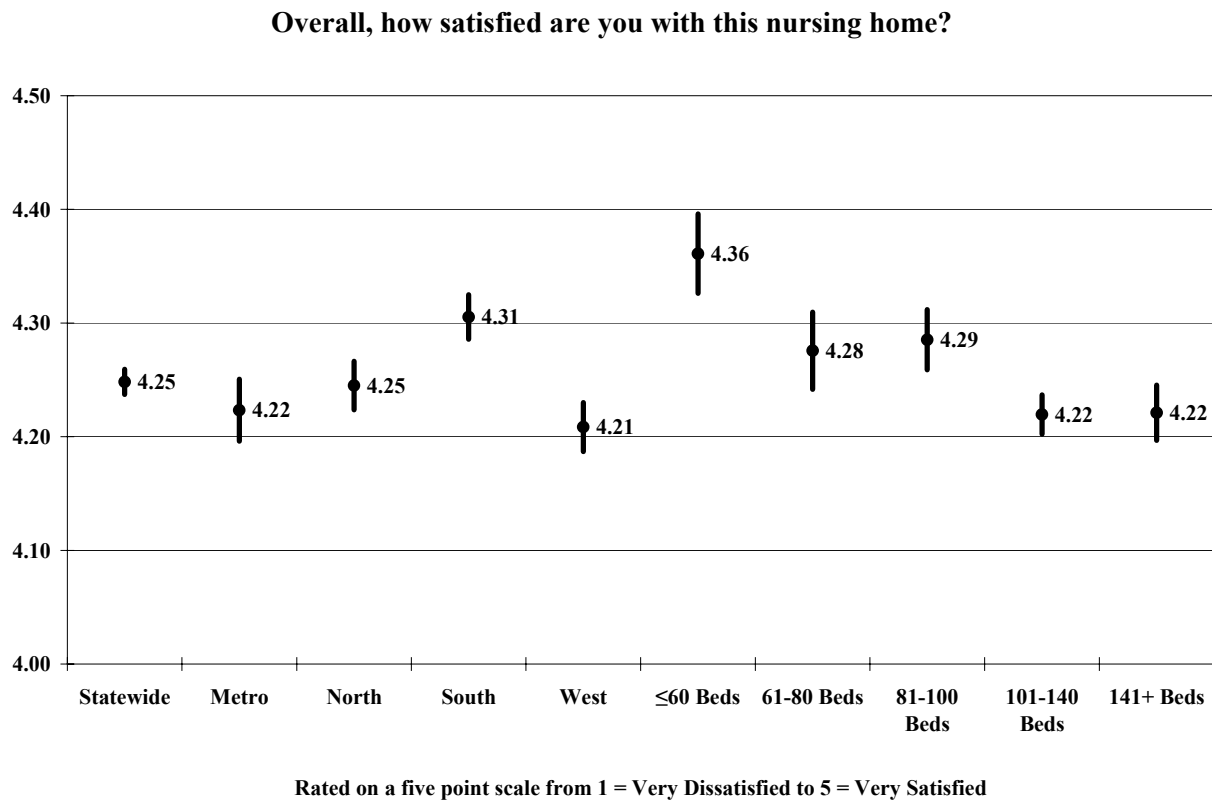


Table 2.2. Overall, how satisfied are you with this nursing home?

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	14540	4.25	4.24	4.26
Region				
Metro	2778	4.22	4.20	4.25
North	3769	4.25	4.22	4.27
South	4370	4.31	4.29	4.32
West	3623	4.21	4.19	4.23
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1437	4.36	4.33	4.40
61-80 Beds	1496	4.28	4.24	4.31
81-100 Beds	2367	4.29	4.26	4.31
101-140 Beds	6071	4.22	4.20	4.24
141+ Beds	3169	4.22	4.20	4.25

Figure 2.3. Overall, how satisfied are you that all of the resident's needs are met?

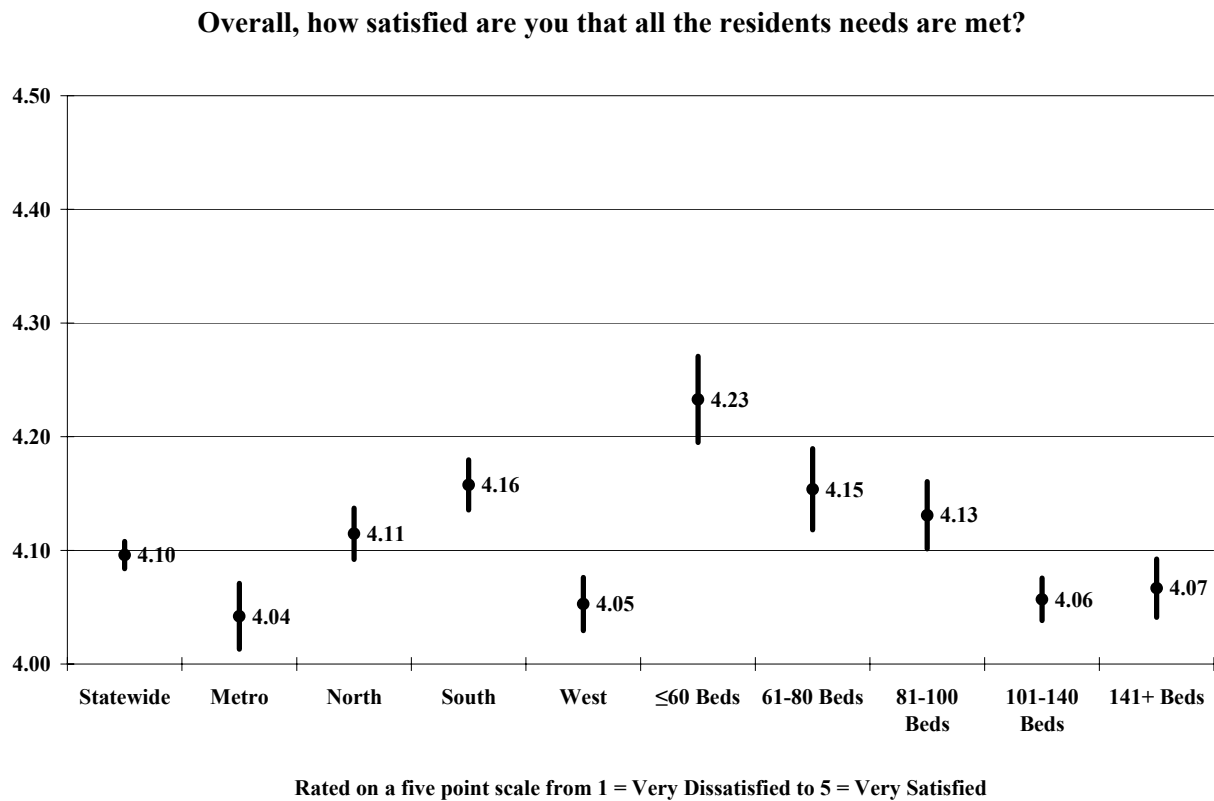


Table 2.3. Overall, how satisfied are you that all of the resident's needs are met?

	n	Average	CI	
			Low	High
Statewide	14345	4.10	4.08	4.11
Region				
Metro	2737	4.04	4.01	4.07
North	3724	4.11	4.09	4.14
South	4319	4.16	4.14	4.18
West	3565	4.05	4.03	4.08
Bed Size				
≤60 Beds	1417	4.23	4.19	4.27
61-80 Beds	1473	4.15	4.12	4.19
81-100 Beds	2340	4.13	4.10	4.16
101-140 Beds	5970	4.06	4.04	4.08
141+ Beds	3145	4.07	4.04	4.09

IX. Individual Question Scores

The table below provides an average score and confidence interval for each of the fifty-three questions, grouped by domain and as measures of overall satisfaction.

Analysis of high and low scores within a domain can identify specific aspects of personal care, operations and environment that consumers rate highly and aspects of such services that may be rated less favorably.

Table A. Statewide Item Level Satisfaction Scores

Satisfaction With:	n	Average	CI (+/-)
Overall Satisfaction Scores			
Overall Satisfaction Scale	14638	4.21	0.00
Overall, how satisfied are you with this nursing home?	14540	4.27	0.01
Overall, how satisfied are you that all the residents' needs are met?	14345	4.12	0.01
DOMAIN1: Satisfaction with the Staff and Administration of the Nursing Home			
That the resident gets his or her medication at the appropriate time?	13872	4.41	0.00
That the quality of physician and specialist services meets the resident's needs?	14310	4.15	0.01
With the help available for filling out the resident's paperwork?	12594	4.25	0.01
That the same staff is assigned to care for the resident over time?	13821	4.09	0.01
That staff considers cultural ethnic differences providing services?	12026	4.11	0.01
That there is enough staff on all shifts to provide sufficient help?	14014	3.65	0.01
With support provided from social services, family groups in the home?	12883	4.03	0.01
That staff attends to the resident's emotional needs?	13996	4.05	0.01
That the staff is friendly when you come to visit?	14657	4.44	0.00
That the staff treats the resident with kindness and respect?	14599	4.40	0.00
That the staff is able to communicate effectively with the resident?	14209	4.22	0.01
That staff get along and work well together?	13827	4.23	0.00
With the response of the staff to problems and requests?	14422	4.16	0.01
That there is open communication between the staff and you?	14688	4.34	0.01
That you receive notification of changes in condition?	14610	4.33	0.01
That staff willingly shares with you how the resident is doing day to day?	14440	4.25	0.01
DOMAIN 2: Satisfaction with Physical Aspects of the Nursing Home			
That hallways and public areas are kept odor free?	14684	4.15	0.01
With the cleanliness of the resident's room?	14672	4.20	0.01
With the amount of space socialize outside of his or her room?	14483	4.16	0.01
That the facility is clean and well maintained?	14662	4.35	0.00
With the physical attractiveness of the nursing home?	14632	4.31	0.00
That the resident's room is bright and cheerful?	14610	4.15	0.01
With the amount of space for personal possessions within the resident's room?	14650	3.81	0.01
That staff encourages the resident to take part in social activities?	13511	4.11	0.01

Satisfaction With:	n	Average	CI (+/-)
DOMAIN 3: Satisfaction with the Activities Available to Residents			
Those meaningful activities are being offered on seven days week?	13223	4.02	0.01
With the amount of physical exercise offered?	12547	3.63	0.01
That there are enough outdoor activities?	10741	3.41	0.01
With the clergy visits or religious services?	12181	3.99	0.01
With the variety of stimulating activities offered?	12968	3.86	0.01
DOMAIN 4: Satisfaction with the Personal Care Provided to Residents			
That dirty clothes are changed as needed?	14127	4.21	0.01
That the staff assures that the resident is clean?	14436	4.09	0.01
That staff keeps to the resident's planned personal care routine?	14087	4.12	0.01
When the laundry system gets the resident's own clothes back to him or her?	11465	3.69	0.01
That bed linens are changed as needed?	14230	4.29	0.00
DOMAIN 5: Satisfaction with Food and Meals			
With the food choices provided at each meal?	13598	3.91	0.01
With the quality of the food, that is, attractive, appetizing, and nutritious?	13645	3.89	0.01
That there are a variety of menu selections throughout the week?	13344	3.97	0.01
With the assistance available to help the resident complete his or her meal?	12506	4.07	0.01
DOMAIN 6: Satisfaction with Resident's Personal Rights			
That the resident is encouraged to be as independent as possible?	12654	4.10	0.01
That staff members respect the resident's privacy?	14001	4.23	0.00
That the nursing home takes sufficient steps to protect personal items?	14221	3.76	0.01
That there is enough security for the facility?	14081	4.19	0.01
With the resident's personal safety?	14471	4.25	0.00
Overall Satisfaction Scale Items			
With the care at this nursing home, overall?	14513	4.30	0.00
With the management of this nursing home, overall?	14463	4.17	0.01
With the staff at this nursing home, overall?	14539	4.33	0.00
With the activities at this nursing home, overall?	13800	4.06	0.01
With the communication at this nursing home, overall?	14643	4.28	0.01
With the meals at this nursing home, overall?	13751	3.94	0.01
With the physical environment at this nursing home, overall?	14591	4.26	0.00
That the resident's personal rights respected, overall?	14382	4.29	0.00